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ON PAGE *A-1*

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Arms Exporter Is Believed Linked With Attempt to Murder Libyan

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 16 — Investigators looking into the attempted assassination of a Libyan student in Colorado last year say they have found evidence that links the man accused of the attack to a former agent for the Central Intelligence Agency. The former agent, Edwin P. Wilson, has been charged with illegally exporting arms to Libya and training terrorists.

On the basis of the evidence, Federal investigators say they now believe Mr. Wilson, who lives in Libya as a fugitive, may be responsible for arranging the attack against the Libyan student, Faisal Zagallai, an outspoken critic of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the leader of the militant Arab nation in North Africa. The evidence is said to include entries in the personal telephone book of the suspect in the attack.

Investigators say they have also found evidence, including records of telephone calls, that they say ties the suspect, Eugene A. Tafoya, to a civilian employee at the Naval Weapons Center in China Lake, Calif.

The civilian, Douglas H. Haden, a computer scientist, said in a telephone interview today that he had met Mr. Tafoya in 1978 while dating his half-sister. But Mr. Haden denied any involvement in or knowledge of the October 1980 attack on Mr. Zagallai, a Libyan studying at Colorado State University.

The Naval Weapons Center conducts highly classified research in explosives and electronics warfare. Four other civilians once employed there have been under Federal investigation for possible criminal activity and links to Libya. Two of them were indicted earlier this year on charges stemming from the theft of military equipment from the center.

Federal investigators and prosecutors say they believe these cases are part of a significant and growing national security problem involving the illegal transportation of sophisticated United States technology to such countries as Libya and the Soviet Union. They also

are increasingly concerned that Mr. Wilson's work for Libya may have included widespread criminal activity inside the United States.

Libyan authorities took responsibility for the attack on Mr. Zagallai, who was shot twice in the head at close range but survived. American officials believe the attempted assassination was part of a concerted effort by Mr. Qaddafi to eliminate opponents of his regime.

Roger S. Young, a spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said today that the bureau was pursuing all leads involving Mr. Tafoya. However, senior officers at the weapons center said they had not heard of the connection to Mr. Haden until yesterday. They said they immediately requested the Naval Investigative Service to open an inquiry.

Mr. Haden, who said his relationship with Mr. Tafoya was purely social and had never involved discussions about Libya, said he had not been called by any Federal investigators.

Mr. Young said that he could not comment on the specific question of whether the F.B.I. was investigating Mr. Haden and his links to Mr. Tafoya.

Some Federal prosecutors have complained that the Justice Department's criminal division has failed to organize an interagency group to pursue the numerous and geographically disparate leads involving Mr. Wilson, the attack in Colorado, the theft of military equipment from China Lake and other related cases.

Common Denominator in Cases

Within the last year, these cases, all of which have Libya as a common denominator, have developed around the nation, but coordination between law enforcement agencies has been, at best, for specific cases only, according to Federal investigators.

For example, a Federal grand jury in Washington, which last year indicted Mr. Wilson and another former C.I.A. agent, Francis E. Terpil, on charges of illegally exporting arms to Libya, is the main instrument for further investigation of that case, even though many new investigative leads involve possible criminal activity outside its jurisdiction.

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Special forces, or Green Berets, in Vietnam, includes numerous references to Mr. Wilson, as well as the former C.I.A. agent's associates and girlfriend, found in Mr. Tafoya's personal telephone book, according to Federal law enforcement officials. The book contained Mr. Wilson's telephone number in Libya, as well as those of some of Mr. Wilson's associates there.

Officials said that there were also records of telephone calls that Mr. Tafoya had made to Mr. Wilson or someone at his residence and business phones.

The indictment returned against Mr. Wilson and Mr. Terpil in April 1980 charged them with conspiring to murder Umar Adullah Muhayshi, a Libyan critic of Colonel Qaddafi who lives in Egypt. According to the indictment, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Terpil offered an individual \$1 million to carry out the assassination. The plan was never carried out.

Curb in Colorado Case

Last week in Fort Collins, Colo., prosecutors in the Tafoya case attempted to introduce this evidence in public court at a bail bond hearing concerning Mr. Tafoya. Judge Robert Miller, however, upheld a defense objection to the evidence, and issued an order banning public discussion of the case by lawyers and investigators.

The evidence linking Mr. Tafoya to Mr. Haden also was found in Mr. Tafoya's telephone book, investigators said. Telephone company records disclosed several calls from Mr. Tafoya to Mr. Haden's residence near the weapons center.

Mr. Haden said today that he had received a postal card from Mr. Tafoya and could recall one telephone call since he moved to the weapons center in early 1980. Mr. Haden said he first learned of Mr. Tafoya's attack on Mr. Zagallai yesterday. "I'm not a newspaper reader," he said.

Denies Hearing of 2 Men

Mr. Haden added that he had never heard of Edwin Wilson or Frank Terpil. He said he was not hiring a lawyer because "I have nothing to hide."

Mr. Haden is the fifth current or former weapons center employee who has been linked directly or indirectly to Libya.

Two former civilian employees, Robert E. Swallow and Dennis J. Wilson, the latter no relation to Edwin P. Wilson, took unpaid leaves from the center in

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